

23-year old Robert Hite was supposed to be an agricultural teacher in Texas, but on April 10, 1942, was in a cavern-like hold of the carrier USS *Hornet*. He and 80 army airmen were dashing through the waves of the Pacific. This carrier was brand-new. It was 809 feet long, about 27,000 tons and, at an unheard of cost of \$31 million, was top-of-the-line.

Two measly months had just gone by since the specially-trained group of fliers had heard Lt. Col. James Doolittle say to them, "We're gonna need volunteers for a dangerous mission that will be of great importance to the American war effort."

The American people had borne tragedy after tragedy since December 7, 1941, interrupted by a sprinkle here and there of victory. The fliers had been training nearly two months, never once knowing their final target.

It was a strange world of secrecy that today would not be replicated. Top Secret? Yes. The starting point from the continental United States was San Francisco Bay. In full view of everybody was the *Hornet*, with her decks covered from stern to stern with small bombers. No American reporter dared report it on the radio or in any newspaper, but a spy with good binoculars could have relayed some tip-off by carrier pigeon away from the metropolis of San Francisco to a hidden hamlet in nearby Muir Woods or the Sierra Nevadas, then out via special transmitter. Today, because of the internet, any spy can flash out anything halfway across the world with a flick of a switch, and so no secret mission would ever start in full view of the public on a California beach or bay.

But, this was 1942. Moreover, if there had been any people friendly to the Japanese Empire, they had been swept up by now. The few bands of pro-Tokyo sympathizers had been picked up from across the West Coast, along with all manner of short-wave radios; a world of freedom for all was over if you were a pro-Axis sympa-



Jimmy Miller

He was the Naval flight officer who helped train the pilots to simulate carrier take-offs, during which heavily-loaded B-25s were flown off ships bounded by white lines marking off equivalent distances.



James H. Doolittle

Lt. Col. James H. (Jimmy) Doolittle was the first to fly across the continent in a single day and also the first to try instrument flying, among his many accomplishments. He led a famous and surprising raid on military targets at Tokyo, Yokohama and other industrial centers of the Rising Sun in 1942.

MORALE BOOSTER

After a 2-day battle in the Coral and Solomon Seas, the official Battle of the Coral Sea ended, resulting in the first Japanese naval defeat of WW II and the first air-naval battle in history; the U.S. lost the aircraft carrier **Lexington**, destroyer **Sims**, oiler **Neosho**. Survivors sailed to the States via Noumea, a tiny Free French island. Australian Stanley Johnston, reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*, was given a tip from aviator Morton T. Seligman that a huge naval battle was going to happen around Midway; incidentally, both were survivors of the **Lexington**. The source was a supposedly top-secret Ultra message conveyed to U.S. ships at sea from Adm. Robert L. Ghormley's HQ on Noumea, radio broadcast on a lesser code called "Cupid." Newsreporter Johnston snooped around Noumea, hopped a fast C-47 and left for Chicago. At the end of six months, the U.S. had not taken a single inch of enemy territory; nor won a single battle on land; but over the sea, it garnered a decisive battle, at Midway.

thizer. Unfortunately, among them were counted the 110,000 people of Japanese ancestry who were loyal to America. Just because their eyes were slanted, and they ate a diet of rice and practiced the Japanese language, these hard working Americans received the deplorable sentence of being thrown into detention camps.

Bands of Nazi-sympathizers were almost all gone, too. Not all, however, some were still roaming around, but these were thousands of miles toward New York and the Midwest. [See pages 167 and 270.] There were no eyes of spies on the West Coast, or Hawaii, for they had all been picked up.

Speaking of Hawaii, just NW of Hawaii, the *Hornet* and her escort of 7 ships rendezvoused with the carrier battle group of the *USS Enterprise*, making for a total of 17. There were now 10,000 men.

////////////////////////////////////



Notice how the aircraft of the early days appeared, the red circle on the U.S. emblem. That is how you can tell the early days of WW II. Color pictures from the 1942 era are difficult to obtain, because it was hard to find color film. People with cameras could also have been called a spy, nerves were jittery and few found the time to take pictures. Also, all branch of services handling photography was puny compared to 1944-45.

From Hawaii to Tokyo, Japan, is 3,852 miles. The perfect chance for a strike involved the battle plan of moving the carrier-laden B-25s (with 2000 pounds of bombs each) to within 412 miles from the Japanese coast. From U.S. naval intelligence, anything between the perimeter of 400-600 miles from the shores of Japan was a very dangerous place. U.S. intelligence had intercepted enemy chatter. Japanese war lords had placed numerous patrol boats on the perimeter. Luckily, the Japanese Empire had no long-range radar.



**Adm. William F.
Halsey**

Aggressive Commander of Carriers, Pacific Fleet, played key parts in various Pacific campaigns. He commanded the task force from which Lt-Col. Doolittle launched his raid on Tokyo.

The American participants never had a chance to take-off from 412 miles. Predawn April 18, only 10 miles from the *Enterprise*, an electrifying message whizzed through the control centers of both carriers—radarmen picked up enemy surface contact. Something small was out there. Intercepted message: three American aircraft carriers were heading for Japan. Admiral William Halsey, in charge of the entire task force, ordered a sudden change in direction. It was still dark. At daybreak, a Kingfisher scout plane was sent to scout and report, like the one in the picture on page 148.

At 0600, it radioed it had spotted a patrol boat. At 7:38 a.m., the guns of the cruiser *Nashville* opened up on her. Japanese Naval Patrol Boat No. 23 was sunk by U.S.



Principle forces of Yamamoto with thunder in their hearts.



The story in additional pictures.

Japan had the edge in carriers and veteran pilots. A secret, deceptive battle fleet was sent to Alaska to lure and split U.S. forces. In the South Pacific, Japanese forces were running wild. From the Solomons to Anchorage, Alaska, it is 5,577 miles.

Kiska landscape. When it was revealed by Washington DC, it came as a complete surprise. That word surprise was paramount in the Japanese war plan, too. As with Pearl Harbor, the Japanese admiralty relied heavily on surprise.

However, Yamamoto's elaborate planning had one peek-a-boo flaw. In a world of surprise, profound silence and vital secrecy, the Admiral's dangerous campaign was watched by HYPO of Hawaii, his diversion et al-HYPO was America's war intelligence post which surveilled Japan's code systems. HYPO's commander, Joe Rochefort, not knowing which area was to be the eventual target in the Pacific, played a trick to find out-well known today. Joe relayed through an underwater cable that Midway's fresh water supply was limited, and then waited.

Rochefort knew the Japanese were tapping the cable and that these two letters, AF, was the designator for



ACCOUNT OF THE MELEE



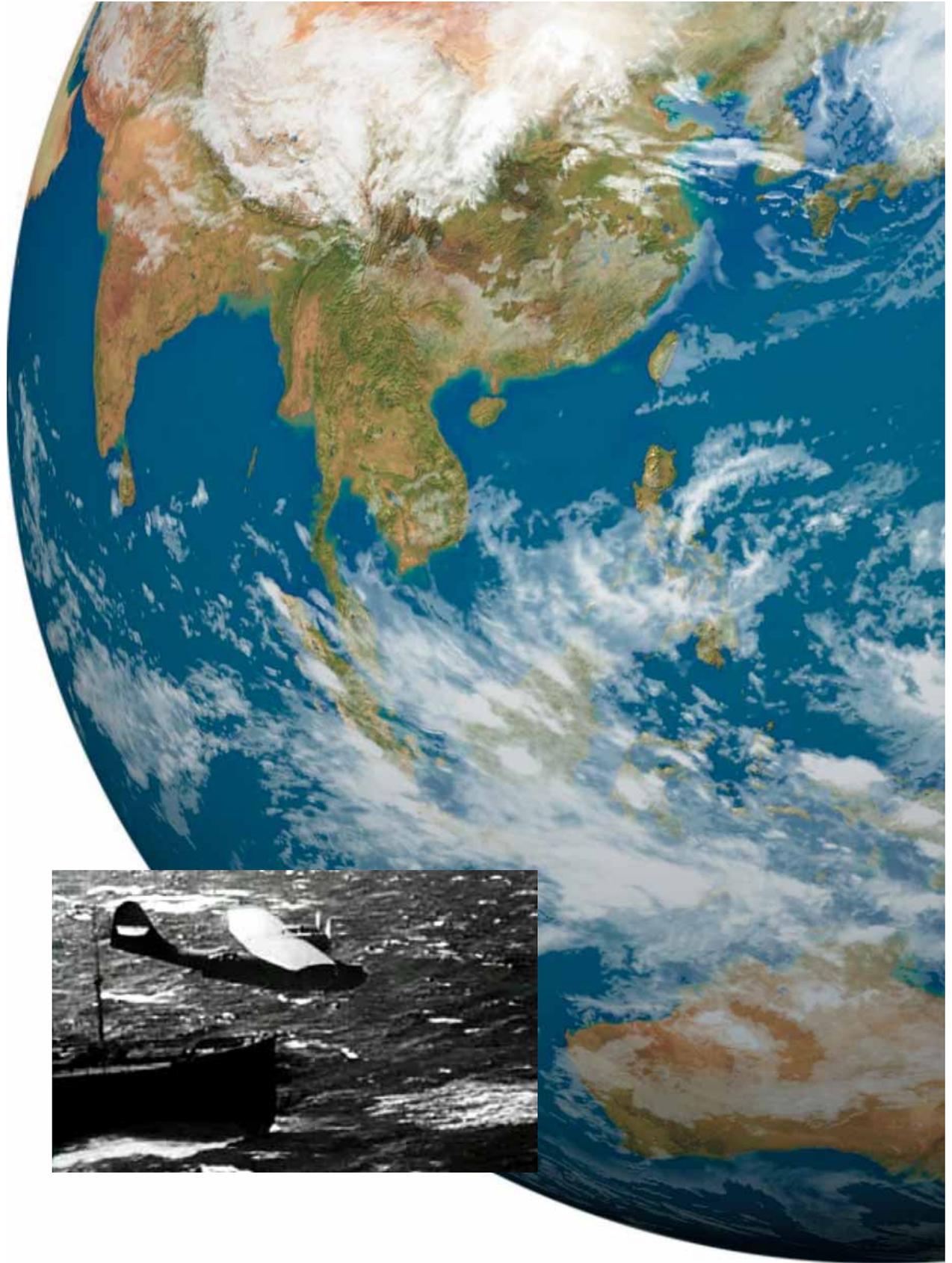
something, but nobody knew what AF was.

Within thirty-six hours, the Owada communications Intelligence network relayed to Tokyo a JN-25 coded message that signalled "AF" as Midway (JN-25 code word was "AF") The decoded statement: AF was low on fresh water. Upon notice, the Commander of the Pacific, naval forces central Pacific, Admiral Chester Nimitz, dispatched his three aircraft carriers from Pearl Harbor to Midway. The USS *Enterprise* and *Hornet* had just returned from patrol-cover in the South Pacific. The USS *Yorktown* was a battered ship from the conflict in the Coral Sea; where another carrier, the *Lexington*, went down. The *Yorktown* gave word that she needed some 90 days reservice. The intercepted message stopped that. She was given 72 hours on Nimitz's orders. The American work crews at Pearl Harbor worked like mad.

With a complement of eight cruisers and fifteen destroyers, the U.S. aircraft carriers sailed for Midway. On board the *Yorktown* stood the commander of all tactical operations, Rear-Admiral Frank J. Fletcher. He and Rear-Admiral Raymond Spruance, on board the *Enterprise*, directed the carrier task forces. Admiral Turner was commander on board the *Hornet*. They had charge of over 10,000 American seamen and aviators.

On board the *Enterprise* were Lt. Commander Stephen Jurika and Lt. Commander Mac Gregor Kilpatrick as assistant navigational officers. Jurika was from the Philippines; his mother was beheaded by the Japanese in Manila.

Kilpatrick was from New York. He was an All-American soccer captain in college back home. Now, they were, along with the rest of the world, at war. Most personnel on board the American carriers knew there was an invasion force, with carriers, heading for Midway. There was nothing secret about it on board; yet, what they didn't know was where the Japanese were.





Italy, the fascist invader of Africa and Albania, Japan, conqueror of much of Asia and the oceanic world, and Nazi Germany formed the Axis alliance. In Dec. of 1941, America's military was sure Japan could be contained. The idea that Japan was a bunch of little monkeys was amplified, and the notion that the Americans were superior and could knock out Japan was a mistake. According to Supreme Court Justice Robert H. Jackson, he had eyewitnessed Sec. of the Navy, Frank Knox, say that it would take six months to defeat Japan--that sentiment was long gone by mid-1942. WW II was going to require a long war. Even though the main tactic of the Allies was to strike against Hitler's Germany first and with priority, Pacific battles did not lay still "until you're ready." In Feb., 1942, and June, 1942, mysterious submarines

surfaced off the shores of California and the Pacific Northwest, and attacked; fortunately, they were small, puny attacks. In June, a battle was forged by Imperial Japan. They never thought that even in one's wildest dreams they were going to lose, but it turned out to be an impressive victory for the people of the United States against the Axis. The aftermath is known as the Battle of Midway.



A fierce tempest was to unwind as their invasion forces approached Midway, but this time the storm of destruction and death drew upon the Imperial Japanese.

Two rare pictures: Kingfisher float plane, a scout for the fleet and a rescue craft. Native inhabitant of Midway, a Gooney. Why is the bird rare? He is in color, vintage 1942.



Before the Second World War, Hollywood director John Ford had been a quasi-official Naval intelligence officer and had travelled all over the Pacific, reporting on Japanese naval activities. Ford filmed much of the footage for *The Battle of Midway*, but he was injured in the making of the film. Direct color cinematography did not transpire outside of the islands. Almost all battle footage was squarely an island event. The documentary won the 1942 Academy Award for Best Documentary short subject. Hardly any aerial combat--like you see in 1944-45--survived. No pictures survive of the massacres.